Essay On Walden (by Alexander Lozupone)

Alex lay on his bed, reading the closing chapter to Walden, a novel by Henry David Thoreau, as he pondered over what he had just read. Walden was a novel in which Throreau lived in a small hut (of sorts), and lived virtually detached from society. He felt that doing so would help him find more of his inner self. This book spoke of his two years and three months separate from the society.

Alex would probably not have read the book if he hadn't been told to in his English class. He was quite content reading his Harry Harrison and Peter David novels, or even something like Scientific American's Mathematical Recreations, a book he had found in his basement. However, this did not prevent him from reading it, and getting something out of it. (After all, if he read it and did NOT get something out of it, it would, to him, have been time which could be better spent.) ys

The ideas presented to him were not wholly new. Although quite a few ideas sprung into his head, this was not what affected him most. Probably the most influential areas of Walden were the areas in which Thoreau covered ideas Alex had been pondering over himself. It is this sort of phrasing, this conformation, which had the greatest effect on Alex.

Obviously, Emerson and Thoreau were bound to have similar ideas. They were both Transcendentalists, and associated with each other. Alex took a liking to the Transcendental philosophy when it was first introduced to him, he could relate to it more than other philosophies which had been presented to him. Most of it made a lot of sense to him, and he had pondered over at previous times. He LIKED it.

Walden was bound to have the most effect on Alex, if for no other reason, because it was the largest piece of Transcendental literature he had read. Even if it did not completely enlighten him, give him a whole new philosophy, it added reassurance, which is just as valuable. Reassurance that he was not alone. Other people stood up for what they believed, did not conform. That an entire philosophy is based on this very

premise.

Not that he needed this reassurance. He had never really cared to fit in to society, with the exception of a brief period during fifth grade. He hadn't cared that people thought him weird for playing with stag beetles rather than fellow classmates. For reading books based on television than just watching the television. Even for growing his hair long, and being constantly mistaken for a young girl. Instead, this newly found reassurance gave him hope to find others like him. To befriend fellow "rebels" of society. People who are not scared to be different, and almost revel in this separation.

Alex had always been against the evil influences of society. He never understood why people liked Bugle Boy jeans more than other brands; to him they looked the same. Nor did he understand why certain animals were called cute, and huggable, and others labeled squirmy, nasty, and "things to be stepped on." This innocence is perhaps something to treasure throughout life, and try and keep in touch with. This, in fact, was a main focal point of Walden, to keep in touch with your inner self, for this is your only self.

The class discussions, to Alex, were also particularly enlightening, not merely in philosophy, but also in his interpretory* skills. With about 30 different people in class, 30 different interpretations were available, most of which were discussed. This helped his reading immensely. For example, a discussion on vegetariane made him think about ethics, why certain things are to be eaten, and certain things are not. Why a cow is a living, thinking creature, as are guinea pigs, yet a carrot is inferior, and not to be eaten. He could truly relate to Arthur Dent when he was told by a cow that its ribs were quite tasty and should be eaten (an event which happened in Douglas Adams' Hitchiker's Guide To The Galaxy.)

Another issue he enjoyed was that of what to do. Should people spend their time inventing, working for society, having fun, doing whatever they please, or something entirely different? Thoreau suggests doing what you wish, as long as you are sustained (for you can do nothing, as far as is

known, if you are dead.) Although Alex found the idea intriguing, and could definitely relate to it, his was quite disappointed that his friends disagreed. While many of his friends studied for tests, took SAT courses, and other things which he deemed silly, he read, listened, and learned. Many of his friends will obviously be more prosperous than him, in terms of material goods, but this does not matter to him (or Transcendentalists), for he wishes to prosper internally. This cannot be done if all you do is work. This made him think of another excerpt from Douglas Adams' Hithchiker's Guide book, which has a computer stating "The only intelligent life on Earth other than humans were dolphins, and it is debatable which is more intelligent. The humans thought they were more intelligent, because they spent their time evolving, inventing, and many other industrious activities, while the dolphins spent their time playing and jumping through hoops. The dolphins, on the other hand, felt THEY were the more intelligent for exactly the same reason." Although he still hasn't determined whether the example holds true literally, he immediately saw how it related figuratively, and appreciated this fact.

Alex, according to himself, is a city dweller. He likes New York City, and really couldn't imagine living somewhere else. He, along with most other people who in the city, is caught in the trap of the city. He has the need to be "doing something." Most people in they city, himself included, if not actually "doing something" will get bored, and quite simply have an urge to find something to do. He regrets this fact, yet sees no easy was to remedy it. According to what others have told him (verbally and literally), living in a more natural climate would actually do the trick for him. However, it is getting more and more difficult to get to a natural area. The furthest he had actually been from New York is Break Neck Ridge, a small mountain located in upstate New York.

In general, Alex had never been extraordinarily enthusiastic about English class. However, this term actually did turn out to be different to him. He could actually appreciate, and relate to Walden, in a way which

was quite new to him. He did not shun away the ideas, thinking he had better ones. For he did not. It was this sort of correlation between ideas, this sort of sense that Walden made, that actually created a spark in Alex's head. A spark that Alex will remember, and try with increased effort, to get closer and closer to.

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What stands out here are several things:

1) your sincere + honest approach
2) your revelations about this new philosophy + what it has offered you
3) + the style in which it's shared — It really adds alot to wit + objective to break up 3rd person having the overview + all.
4) It really is comments on the whole experience with Thoreau, me + the class!